

## Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 AID-20 PC-15 RSR-01 IO-12 /120 W

----- 080691

O 161653 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9914

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

UNCLAS LA PAZ 2945

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

LIMA FOR ASST. SEC. KUBISCH

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINS BL

SUBJ: SELICH AFFAIR

REF: LA PAZ 2929

1. IN PRESS CONFERENCE NIGHT OF MAY 15 MININTERIOR ARCE AND MININFO CABALLERO BROUGHT PRESS UP TO DATE ON SELICH AFFAIR.

2. THEY ANNOUNCED THAT SELICH AND THOSE ARRESTED WITH HIM WERE INVOLVED IN A CONSPIRACY TO OVERTHROW THE BANZER GOVERNMENT. ARCE STATED THAT 10 CONSPIRATORS INCLUDING SELICH WERE ARRESTED IN THE MAY 14 RAID, AND THAT AN ELEVENTH IS BEING SOUGHT. ARCE RELEASED THEIR NAMES TO THE PRESS, FOUR OF WHOM ARE THE MILITARY OFFICERS EARLIER IDENTIFIED BY THE EMBASSY ( LA PAZ 2902) AND THE REST CIVILIANS. THE CIVILIANS APPEAR TO BE RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT  
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BARRIENTISTAS. HE SAID THE FOUR MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE ARMED FORCES FOR MILITARY TRIAL, AND THAT THE CIVILIANS WILL BE TRIED UNDER CIVIL LAW.

3. ARCE AND CABALLERO TOOK AN AGGRESSIVE LINE AGAINST THE PRESS, SINGLING OUT PARTICULARLY THE AFTERNOON DAILIES ULTIMA HORA AND NUEVA JORNADA, FOR IRRESPONSIBILITY IN THEIR MAY 15 REPORTING ON THE SELICH AFFAIR AND SPECIFICALLY FOR REPORTING THAT AIR FORCE MAJOR SALAMON AND OTHER MILITARY OFFICERS HAD BEEN ARRESTED AS CONSPIRATORS. SALAMON AND THE OTHERS WERE PRESENT AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE. ARCE ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO BRING THE GUILTY JOURNALISTS TO TRIAL. IN A COMPANION ATTACK ON THE PRESS, THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY ISSUED A HARD HITTING STATEMENT CRITICIZING THE PRESS' FALSE ACCUSATIONS OF SALAMON AND OTHERS, STATING PRESIDENT BANZER' S FULL CONFIDENCE IN SALAMON.

4. ARCE REITERATED THAT THE " TRAGIC DEATH" OF SELICH WAS AN ACCIDENT, STATING THAT " IN THE NAME OF THE GOVERNMENT, HE ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY" FOR SELICH' S DEATH.

5. MAY 16 MORNING NEWSPAPERS CARRY TEXT OF OFFICIAL MESSAGES FROM INTERIOR CITIES REAFFIRMING TOTAL " TRANQUILITY" IN THESE CITIES. HOWEVER, THE MAYOR OF TARIJA, A BROTHER OF COL. AZURDUY, ONE OF THE DETAINED HERE, IS IN HIDING ALONG WITH THE RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY THERE. THE MAY 16 PRESS ALSO CARRIES A DECLARATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE FPN STATING FULL AND CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THE BANZER GOVERNMENT, AND THE ALLIANCE OF THE MNR AND FSB SUPPORTED BY THE MILITARY.

6. COMMENT: THE OFFICIAL STATEMENTS, PARTICULARLY THE CASTIGATION OF THE PRESS, SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO CURTAILING PRESS SPECULATION. AS OF THIS MORNING, HOWEVER, RUMORS CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE, NONE OF WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBSTANTIATED BY THIS EMBASSY, THAT OTHERS IN ADDITION TO THOSE NAMED BY ARCE WERE INVOLVED. OUR POLITICAL CONTACTS AND WE SUSPECT THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL VIEW WITH SKEPTICISM THE GOVERNMENT' S STATEMENT THAT SELICH' S DEATH WAS ACCIDENTAL. THEY REPORT THAT " EVERYONE BELIEVES" THAT IF SELICH WASN' T KILLED ON PURPOSE , HE AT LEAST DIED OF INJURIES SUSTAINED BY BEATINGS AT THE HANDS OF THE POLICE. NO MATTER WHAT THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO CONVINCE PUBLIC OPINION THAT SELICH' S DEATH WAS THE RESULT OF A FALL DOWN  
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STAIRS. IN RECOGNITION OF THIS, MAY 16 PRESENCIA' S LEAD EDITORIAL, COMMENTING ON THE PUBLIC' S DOUBT OF THE OFFICIAL EXPLANATION OF SELICH' S DEATH, CALLS FOR A PUBLIC JUDICIAL HEARING AS THE ONLY WAY TO GET AT THE TRUTH.  
SIRACUSA

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NMAFVVZCZ

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\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* UNCLASSIFIED

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**TAGS:** PINS, BL  
**To:** ARA  
ASUNCION  
BRASILIA  
BUENOS AIRES  
LIMA  
SANTIAGO  
SECSTATE WASHDC

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